The Builder.

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ISH was an article of food of much importance in mediæval England, when abstinence from flesh was generally enforced at stated periods as a religious observance; and amongst the city guilds, or companies, the "Mystery of Fishmongers" stood prominent. Originally there were two fellowships, the Fishmongers and the Stock (or salt) Fishmongers. In the earliest document respecting them, letters-patent dated 10th July, in the 37th year of Edward III.,* the first are called *Pessoners* (the document is in French) and the second "Stokfysshemongeres." In 1536, they were incorporated by the appellation of "The Wardens and Commonalty of the Mystery of Fishmongers of the City of London." The great antiquity of the Company is shown by the fact, that Edward III., in the earliest extant charter just now mentioned, confirms the grants *immemorially* made to them by his progenitors. They were amongst those Companies amerced in the reign of Henry II. (1154 to 1189), and in 1298, showed their great wealth by a splendid pageant in honour of Edward I.

This Company appears always to have played a chief part in the pageantries of the times. They preserve amongst their archives a very curious series of coloured drawings, illustrative of a pageant for the inauguration of John Leman, who was made a knight during his mayoralty, in 1616, and which were published by the Company, to their credit be it said, in 1844, in twelve plates, drawn by Mr. Henry Shaw, with an interesting historical introduction by Mr. J. Gough Nichols.† The Fishmongers' ranks the fourth of the twelve great companies. Their old meeting-place was taken down in 1827, when the improvements about London-bridge were going on, and their present hall was built soon after on the former site, where it forms the west side of Adelaide-place, an important feature at the foot of the bridge.

The amount of money expended by the London Companies for charitable purposes, would startle those who inquired into it for the first time, and the Fishmongers contribute a noble share. At Bray, in Berkshire, they have almshouses, known as Jesus Hospital, for forty people, six being poor men or women of the company, and thirty-four, poor parishioners of Bray. It is a quadrangular building, with a chapel, surrounding a court, and was completed in 1628.‡ At Harrietsham, in Kent, they have twelve distinct houses, known as Quested's,—from the founder's name, which were rebuilt in 1770-72, at a cost of 2,470*l.*, where twelve poor persons, six of them being members of the Company, receive weekly allowances.§

Their most important foundation, however, is that known as St. Peter's Hospital, and sometimes called the Fishmongers' Almshouses,* for decayed members of the fraternity. The good work was commenced in 1615, by Sir Thomas Hunt, who left 20*l.* a-year towards building and founding an hospital for six men. Other donations followed, and in 1617 a piece of ground, in the parish of Newington, Surrey, was purchased by the Company, and twelve houses built at a cost of 400*l.*

The plot of land cost 110*l.* What is it worth now?

In 1633 six more houses were built, and a dining-hall. Then two, and afterwards two more. Then came a noble bequest from John Hulbert in 1721, being no less than 9,467*l.*, the residue of his estate, to build and found an almshouse for twenty poor men and women. The twenty houses were accordingly added, making in the whole forty-two; and many of our readers doubtless know the quaint old pile which they form, close by the "Elephant and Castle." It comprises three courts; has a dining-hall and chapel; and is surrounded by a low wall.

The site was then an open, healthy spot in the country, far away from the town. It is now in the heart of a crowded neighbourhood: the buildings, too, are dilapidated, and for these, or other reasons with which we are unacquainted,† the Company determined on the removal of the hospital to Wandsworth, in the same county, where the first stone of a new asylum, designed by Mr. Richard Suter, the Company's architect, was laid on the 23rd of June last, by Mr. W. Flexman Vowler, the prime warden.

The new building is now in course of completion, and we give in our present number an isometrical view of the south front of it.‡ It is placed on an open, airy site, at East Hill, on the northern side of the London-road.

The buildings occupy three sides of a quadrangle, about 255 feet by 235 feet; the fourth side opening towards the south, and upon the high road, whereby the whole will be distinctly seen. The back, or north front, has been designed to present a façade towards the Richmond and Windsor Railway, from which it is distant but a few hundred yards. There are forty-two dwellings, each comprising three rooms, with complete and distinct offices, also rooms for the medical officer, clergyman, paymaster, and pensioners, and a chapel in the centre. The style is Tudor: the chimney-shafts are large and lofty, and form a prominent feature in the design. The lower story of the chapel is appropriated to the payment of the pensioners. The whole premises, with garden, lawn, and shubbery, when complete, will occupy nearly seven acres. The principal material is white Suffolk brick. For the dressings, Caen stone is used, which has received several coats of cold-drawn linseed oil as a preservative: we mention this especially, that the result may be hereafter observed. Although in the first instance the stone is stained by the oil, the weather soon bleaches it again.

So far as the building has proceeded, Mr. Suter has ably carried out the intentions of the Company. St. Peter's Hospital is as it should be, a sound and honest structure, well calculated to endure. We are not aware of the motives which prompted the departure from the general style of the buildings in the entrance gateway: the inclosure, however, is not yet formed and this will probably be reconsidered. Mr. Jay is the contractor, and the cost of the buildings is estimated at 18,000*l.* The total expenditure will, however, of course be much more. "The amount we now annually expend in support of this hospital," said Mr. Vowler, on the occasion of laying the first stone, when he referred with justifiable pride to the liberal spirit in which the men of to-day are carrying on the good work handed down to them by their predecessors, "the amount we annually expend is not less than seventeen hundred pounds (formerly it was not more than 360*l.*), and whereas the entire cost of the old hospital did not exceed three thousand pounds, the entire cost of the new one will probably be twenty-five thousand."

We congratulate the Fishmongers' Company on their well-doing, and remind them of their ancient motto,

All Worship be to God only.

FALL OF ARCH.—MODEL HOUSES FOR FAMILIES.

STREATHAM-STREET, BLOOMSBURY.

On Thursday in last week a serious accident occurred at the model houses in Streatham-street, Bloomsbury, now building under the direction of Mr. H. Roberts. The roof and floors here are formed—as we have on previous occasions stated—with flat hollow-brick arches. In our last volume (vii.), p. 326, we gave a plan of these model houses: on reference to that, a separate building will be seen, on the left-hand side of the open area, having about 34 feet frontage next the area, in three main divisions, a partition forming a passage having been omitted, and 19 feet deep. This building is five stories high including the basement. The arches which form the floors are of hollow bricks 9 inches long, 6 inches high, and 4 inches wide, turned in Portland cement, and they rise 9¼ inches. The arches over the two end divisions on each story spring from an iron skew-back next the external wall, and from a stone core in the division wall, with two iron tie-rods connecting the iron skew-back and the stone core in each arch. The division walls are 9 inches thick, carried up for three stories in Portland cement, and above in mortar. The arches in the centre division have no tie-rods, the outer arch on each side being considered such an abutment as to render ties unnecessary. The whole of the arches were turned, with the exception of the arch for the two-pair floor in the middle division, which the men were then engaged upon. The arches for the roof, precisely similar to those for the floors, had been finished some time, and the men had just spread over them a layer of concrete and left them, when the centre roof-arch, 10 feet 6 inches span, fell in, broke through the arch under it, overwhelmed the men at work on the next floor, and brought down the two arches below. Three men were very seriously injured, but, we believe, are progressing favourably. The division walls, from which the arch sprung, were forced slightly outwards, the arch on each side broken, and the two external walls, strange to say—one 1½-brick thick, and the other 2½-bricks with recesses—*rent away at both angles, at the top, from the front and back wall.*

It appears that the piece of ground on which this building is erected was not obtained until after Michaelmas last. The work was consequently carried up quickly, but not sufficiently so to save the roof arches from the effect of the frost which set in almost immediately they were turned (Dec. 24th), and before they were covered.

The opinion of some interested in the matter is, that the Portland cement being frozen dry without uniting the bricks, became to a considerable extent rotten, and to this cause they attribute the failure of the arch when the concrete was placed on it, preparatory to laying the asphalte. It had been stated at the Institute by the architect only on the Monday before, that the strength of three experimental arches

* Printed in Herbert's "History of the Twelve Great Livery Companies of London."

† This pageant, given on Lord Mayor's-day, 1616, and called "Chrysanaleia, the Golden Fishing," was devised by Anthony Munday.

‡ The average annual expenditure here previous to 1823, according to Herbert, was 934*l.* 10*s.*

§ The company have also schools, presentations to Christ's Hospital, exhibitions to students in the Universities, money for loans to freemen, &c.

* The fact that there are other "Fishmongers' Almshouses" (at Wood-green, Middlesex), founded by the trade, and not the Company, renders the retention of this ancient title more than ever desirable.

† The value of the land at Newington for building purposes would probably further justify the change.

‡ See page 54.

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